



Date: September 2, 2014

To: Thomas J. Bonfield, City Manager
Through: Keith Chadwell, Deputy City Manager
From: Mark D. Ahrendsen, Director of Transportation
Subject: Agenda Item – Regional Branding Study for Transit

Executive Summary

Following an 18-month evaluation, including surveys and focus groups, five Triangle area transit agencies have agreed to move forward with a branding approach that unifies these transit agencies through a customizable, but common naming convention. The proposed new brand name is Go, followed by the city name. For example, GoDurham, GoChapel Hill, GoRaleigh, etc.

Participating agencies are informing their respective boards and authorities about the proposed re-naming of their transit systems through September. If agencies, with the concurrence of their boards, agree to move forward, the public launch including an information campaign to inform employees, riders and others of changes to signage, bus paint schemes, websites, maps, etc. will begin in November 2014. The re-branding initiative would be phased in with full implementation occurring over several years.

Recommendation

The Office of Public Affairs and Transportation Department recommend that City Council receive a presentation from Triangle Transit regarding the proposed re-branding of Durham Area Transit Authority, along with transit agencies in Raleigh, Chapel Hill, Cary and Triangle Transit.

Background

Currently, there are seven transit agencies that operate in the Triangle, including Durham Area Transit Authority, managed by Triangle Transit, and others in Raleigh, Chapel Hill and Cary (including two university systems). For several years, the agencies have worked together to identify ways to coordinate efforts to improve efficiencies and the overall experience of customers. Some of those efforts have been through unified marketing and outreach, coordinated service planning, joint bus procurement, a unified fare structure, employer outreach and TDM and trip planner services. Examples include: GoTriangle for marketing and information; GoLive app for real-time arrival information; and a Regional Call Center.

In March 2013, with funding from NCDOT and under the leadership of Triangle Transit, the participating agencies, (TT, DATA, CAT, C-Tran and Chapel Hill Transit) agreed to explore the possibility of creating a regional transit brand as a way to present a more cohesive transit presence and enhance marketing efforts. A consultant, Clean Design/FGI Research, was hired to help navigate the process, with the first phase being to collect information through a survey and case studies, assess the data and then decide whether to move forward to Phase II, which would provide recommendations on naming options, design graphics, strategy and implementation costs.

Phase I, consisting of telephone surveys to 1,000 riders and non-riders along with case studies of other transit agencies that have incorporated a regional brand, was completed in June 2013. The overall results revealed that each of the transit agencies has the opportunity to improve its brand image by expanding the footprint to include other agencies. In other words, customer awareness of each agency would be strengthened by being identified as part of a unified organization that serves the region. Additionally, case studies in other regions showed that regional branding can have a positive impact on public perception, improve ridership, help riders and non-riders realize the connectivity between systems and future modes, while maximizing all local resources for a larger marketing impact.

Given these findings, participating agencies met with their respective authorities to move forward with Phase II. The consultant provided recommendations on design and name, as well as explored options that maintained each agency's own local flavor and identity while providing a stronger connection to other transit services in the region.

After several months, multiple meetings with each agency, additional outreach and feedback from riders, Clean Design presented three naming conventions and six design concepts to the transit stakeholder group. The stakeholder group deliberated and finally selected one naming convention and one core design concept.

The total cost of Phase I was \$74,500, with \$50,000 coming from NC DOT and the remainder split between the transit partners. The cost of Phase II was \$66,000 with \$30,000 coming from NC DOT and the remainder split between the transit partners.

Issues and Analysis

One of the key challenges was finding a brand name and design that demonstrated a more unified connection between the systems but at the same time, allowed for local identify and flavor. The participating agencies believe the proposed new brand addresses this key challenge.

Alternatives

Since all participating agencies are reviewing the re-branding proposal and recommendation, it would be beneficial for all involved parties to be in agreement with the new naming convention. At this point, since funding has been exhausted to further explore a new branding approach, an alternative would be for the Durham Area Transit Authority to forego participation in the regional rebranding.

Financial Impact

To minimize costs the re-branding would be phased in over time. For example, the new name/logo would be used on route and schedule brochures as route and schedule changes are made and as brochures re-ordered and as other print material is re-ordered. The new name/logo would be used as uniforms are ordered. The new name/logo would be applied to buses and vans as new vehicles are ordered or vehicles are scheduled for painting. Initially, websites would be updated with the new system names, colors and logo without changing content. A public launch of the new name/logo is projected for November 2014 and would include the re-painting of one bus from each of the participating agencies with the new name, logo and color scheme. The cost to repaint one bus is estimated at \$8,000.

SDBE Summary

Not applicable.

Attachments

PowerPoint presentation